

Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



Lakewood: Pam Sponholtz, Project Leader

US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs: Brian Mihlbachler, Biological Scientist, Diane Strohm, Biological Scientist, Greg Speights, Biological Technician, Steve Wallace, Forestry Technician

Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora: Krystal Phillips, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Peterson, Cheyenne Mountain, Schriever Air Force Bases: Max Canestorp, Natural Resources Manager

Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park: Chris Kennedy, Fish Biologist

Warren Air Force Base, Cheyenne, WY: Timothy Grosch, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

November 2013 Accomplishment Report

Leadership in Science and Technology

Department of Defence Legacy Program proposal: Brian reviewed a DoD Legacy Program proposal from the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory entitled "Integrated Assessment of Breeding Bird Populations and Habitat Needs on DoD Installations" and provided a letter of support from the Air Force Academy (Academy).

Aerial Reconnaissance Monitoring for Bark Beetle Infestation: Diane Strohm met with Academy Biology professor Col Steve Hasstedt to discuss opportunities for detecting bark beetle activity through remotely-piloted aerial flights and infrared spectral analysis. A new Cadet course is being designed to encompass various facets of this study, which will provide valuable information in support of forest health protection.

Partnerships and Accountability



Max Canestorp was recognized for his extensive years of service as the Natural and Cultural Resource Manager at Pueblo

Chemical Depot with a certificate of Appreciation and Commander's Medal. Max will be transferring from PCD to Air Force bases located in Colorado Springs.

Future pronghorn depredation activities: Tim Grosch met with Wyoming Game and Fish Department Regional Wildlife Supervisor Rick King to discuss future pronghorn depredation activities at F.E. Warren (FEW). Proper shooting techniques, appropriate calibers, safety concerns, and herd management objectives were discussed. Rick evaluated the proficiency of FEW's sharpshooters and approved pronghorn removal.

Protecting riparian on the Academy: Brian Mihlbachler met with Union Pacific Railroad representatives to discuss partnering on the construction of a grade control structure on Monument Creek to protect riparian habitat and a railroad bridge crossing. Channel down-cutting, headcutting, and the movement of riprap previously placed to protect the bridge abutments has created an unstable situation that can be easily mitigated if prompt action is taken.



Incising Monument Creek channel and headcutting under the Union Pacific railroad bridge, Air Force Academy

Tribal Wildlife Grant Review: Krystal Phillips and Diane Strohm partnered with Tom Econopouly of the FWS Region 6 Water Resources Division to review three Tribal grant proposals. Several panels evaluated a total of 13 proposals and participated in web meetings throughout November.

Site visit to cutthroat trout restoration project: Pam Sponholtz, Bill Noonan, Bob Timberman (Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program) and Brian Hodge (Trout Unlimited) made a site visit to Milk Creek in the Yampa drainage to see how recent stream structures were holding up after recent precipitation events. This project was funded by a combination of National Fish Passage and Western Native trout funding.



Stream structures are holding in Milk Creek for cutthroat trout habitat restoration

Landline Survey: Diane Strohm continues to coordinate with the Bureau of Land Management on a project to survey the south, west and north boundaries of the Academy. Fieldwork is nearing completion with final reports due this winter.

Pikes Peak Wildfire Partners (PPWPP) Meeting at Academy: Steve Wallace and Diane Strohm hosted a PPWPP meeting at the Academy in

November. This consortium of wildfire professionals, wildfire mitigation contractors, agency representatives and homeowners is dedicated to reduce threat of wildfire to life and property through education, cooperation and coordination of resources. Plans are being made to host the second annual “Living with Wildfire” workshop in Colorado Springs next spring.

USAF Wildfire Center Coordination: Diane Strohm worked on plans with a representative from the USAF Wildfire Center for a site visit to review the Academy’s fire program. Diane will host a regional meeting next month for USFWS Natural Resources Managers and Fire staff from CO Front Range USAF installations to learn about the newly-established Fire Center, located at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida.

Union Pacific Railroad clearing: Steve Wallace and Diane Strohm also coordinated with Union Pacific to monitor tree and brush clearing along the railroad right-of-way. An extensive clearing has resulted in large woody debris piles, which can lead to Ips beetle problems if not chipped soon. The project will be complete in December.

Closeout meeting with Pueblo Chemical Depot: Current natural resource manager Max Canestorp will be transferring to Air Force bases in the Colorado Springs area. Max and Pam Sponholtz met with PCD staff to discuss next steps. PCD reiterated their interest in replacing this position as soon as possible.

Air Force Regional Encroachment Management Action Plan (REMAP): Brian Mihlbachler reviewed the REMAP, which included an analysis of off-base stormwater, wildland fire, noxious weed, and forest pest and disease impacts that could affect Air Force natural resources and the military training mission.

Wyoming Weed and Pest Management meeting: Tim Grosch attended Wyoming Weed and Pest Management meeting at the State Forestry building. Representatives from Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming State Forestry, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and other agencies meet on a regular basis to discuss issues related to weed and pest management. Cheat grass and emerald ash borer concerns were major discussions with the group as well as the decision to turn the group into a formal team.

Tree City USA: Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) has been designated as a Tree City USA annually since 2004. If designated as a Tree City USA for 2013 by the Colorado State Forester, BAFB will receive its ninth year certificate. Krystal Phillips prepared, staffed, and delivered the signed the BAFB 2013 Tree City USA package to the Colorado State Forester.

Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP): Air Force Instruction 32-1053, Chapter 3.5.5 outlines the annual plan review with the installation Natural Resource Manager. Krystal Phillips provided comments for consideration and ensured plan continuity with the signed Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan and all component plans.

Lake Williams Design Review: The completed environmental assessment for the removal of Lake Williams on Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) outlines a requirement for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to review the design to remove the Lake Williams Dam and restore the area to a natural drainage. During the month of November, Krystal Phillips reviewed the Biological Resources Report for the 10% Design Submittal. Krystal recommended changes be made to the site map for clarity and continuity throughout the document and corrections be

made to the burrowing owl species section of the report as inconsistencies were outlined.

Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) Project Review: Air Force Installation Support Team personnel tasked Krystal Phillips to review and amend FY14 project descriptions and scoring. During the month of November, Krystal reviewed and improved two project verbiage descriptions in order to gain clarity for higher leadership to justify proper need and funding level for Natural Resource Program on Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB).

Interagency correspondence: Max Canestorp drafted letters to the FWS Region 2, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the Texas Parks and Wildlife offices to advise them of Air Force radar stations in their respective areas that are being decommissioned.

Species Conservation and Management

West Monument Creek site visit: Brian Mhlbachler participated in a site visit with Colorado Springs Utilities biologists and engineers of the 2013 Waldo Canyon Fire flood damage to West Monument Creek within CSU's Pine Valley Municipal Water Treatment Facility. Marginal habitat for the threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse occurs within the CSU facility, but planned stabilization of the damaged channel is more likely to benefit downstream habitat on Academy property through sediment reduction.



Upper reach of West Monument Creek to be stabilized by Colorado Springs Utilities to mitigate for flood damage from the Waldo Canyon Fire

Denver Museum of Nature & Science: Brian started coordinating with entomologists from the Denver Museum of Nature & Science that would like to collect moths, scarab beetles, and other insects on Front Range DoD bases in spring/summer 2014. The museum is updating their state checklists and recognizes the value of surveying high quality habitats often found on protected military facilities.

Thermal character of two lakes: Chris Kennedy replaced water temperature loggers from Bear and Dream Lake within Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) to retrieve the data they contained. The temperature data is used to assess the thermal character of these areas as it pertains to cutthroat trout recruitment.

Luncheon for volunteers: Chris Kennedy hosted an appreciation luncheon for volunteers who have assisted in conducting fisheries field work within RMNP during the summer of 2013. Ten volunteers and 15 guests were in attendance. The event was held at Oskar Blues grill and Brewery in Lyons, CO. A slide show was prepared and shown to recap the summer's activities.

A bevel of Pronghorn antelope: Pronghorn removal efforts began on F. E. Warren Air Force Base (FEW). The program will continue through the winter until Wyoming Game and Fish Department Chapter 56 Permit stipulations (100 annually) have been met or annual funding for meat processing has been depleted. FEW has nearly 300+ pronghorn living year round on Base but social carrying capacity was determined to be 150-175 animals. Therefore Leadership has requested lethal removal through sharp shooting to aid in herd management. Cooperation between Civil Engineering Squadron along with Security Forces has made this venture possible already culling 34 pronghorn within the first two weeks. All meat is processed and donated out

to local charities or those in need. Approximately 943 pounds have been given thus far.



Security Forces and Civil Engineering working together



Unafraid antelope just stare after the shot



Antelope gather once again post shot

2013 Burrowing Owl Report: Max Canestorp, USFWS, finalized the Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) burrowing owl report during the month of November. Krystal Phillips reviewed the report and disseminated the report to appropriate stakeholders.

Rabbit Carcass Donation: Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) Pest Management Shop routinely sets traps to humanely remove cottontail rabbits, considered a nuisance species and outlined as such in the Integrated Pest Management Plan. The carcasses are frozen and donated to the Birds of Prey Foundation in Broomfield, CO, to be fed to injured and orphaned raptors in the process of being rehabilitated for release into the wild. In an effort to conserve wildlife resources, cradle to grave, Krystal Phillips routinely coordinates and transports the carcasses to the facility. During November, 100+ carcasses were donated to the facility.

Data entry for native cutthroat trout project: Preparation of data and creation of ArcGIS maps from data collected from Paradise Creek, Boundary and Adams Lakes within Rocky Mountain National Park during the 2013 field season. Chris Kennedy collected this data as part of a project to assess the area for the potential of converting it to native cutthroat trout. Data collected include: pH readings, water flows, mapping of backwaters, location of macroinvertebrate collections, lake depth readings, extent of fish, locations of fish migration barriers, time of water travel, fish survey locations, and locations of temperature loggers. Data and maps will be used in a report on all information collected so that a chemical treatment plan can be developed if it is decided to go forward with a reclamation project.

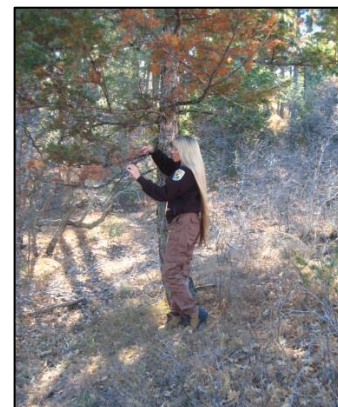
Oxygen systems for cutthroat trout: Chris Kennedy installed oxygen system in Lily Lake within Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). This lake contains a population of

cutthroat trout and is prone to winterkill. The oxygen system allows the fish to overwinter within the lake.

Formal Letter: Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) Environmental Restoration Program (ERP) Site 3, Former Base Landfill is developing the final list of applicable, relevant, appropriate regulations (ARAR) for the Record of Decision (ROD) in coordination with the Environmental Protection Agency and state agency. Krystal Phillips coordinated USFWS review and provided input into the regulations regarding justification for the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) on Site 3 to allow Air Force level attorneys with the proper information for their legal decision-making.

Habitat Conservation and Management

US Forest Service (USFS) Insect and Disease Site Visit: Steve Wallace and Diane Strohm partnered with several forest health specialists from the USFS to evaluate deteriorating conditions in Academy fir trees. Recent outbreaks of the Douglas fir beetle and spruce budworm have resulted in substantial tree decline and mortality in southern Colorado. Following the field visit, Steve worked with a USFS Entomologist to identify potential insect trap locations, which will be installed next spring to monitor populations.



Diane Strohm inspects dying Douglas fir foliage
Steve also gathered gypsy moth traps to return to the USFS for analysis.

Bark Beetles: The beetle season is drawing to a close. Developing broods will enter a quiescent state under tree bark, with emergence expected in early spring. Steve Wallace continues field surveys to locate recently-infested trees, which will be chipped or de-barked to prevent further spread.

Pine Valley Home Demolition Area: Steve Wallace and Diane Strohm worked with the US Army Corps of Engineers to firm up plans for tree removal and site restoration in an area of homes scheduled for demolition next year.

Tree Clearing in Area Recently Reacquired by Academy: Diane Strohm worked with a contractor to clear dead and dying trees in proximity to the Heritage House, a General Officer's Quarter in Pine Valley. The area had been the site of numerous homes which were privatized and subsequently removed several years ago. Recently deeded back to the Academy, this area has experienced high tree mortality due to drought stress.

Tree and Brush Removal at Ammunition Storage Site: Diane Strohm reviewed plans to remove brush, small trees and tree limbs in proximity to the munitions storage facility in Jacks Valley.

Firewood monitoring: Diane Strohm has been monitoring cut wood for Ips (engraver) bark beetle activity, employing several techniques to assess insect resiliency in cut wood. Ips beetle infestation in firewood has been a perplexing problem, due to high beetle populations which have thrived in drought conditions. Recently cut or downed wood is extremely attractive to the Ips beetle, which then can attack nearby live trees.

Upland and riparian areas on Middle Tributary: Brian Mihlbachler participated in a final design review of Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) mitigation plan for upland and riparian areas on Middle Tributary. Stabilization of the eroding channels will

reduce sedimentation and help restore degraded Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat.



Reach of Middle Tributary to be stabilized and restored as part of CDOT's mitigation for the I-25 widening project, Air Force Academy

DoD Legacy Program proposal: Brian Mihlbachler reviewed a DoD Legacy Program proposal from the Colorado Natural Heritage Program entitled "Threats and Stressors to Species at Risk and Ecological Systems, Practical Implications, and Management Strategies for Installations in Colorado and the Western U.S." and provided a letter of support from the Academy.

Wetlands Project: Krystal Phillips submitted proper agency specific documentation to the USFWS Regional Office in support of the execution of a wetlands project on Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB).

USFWS Coordination: Krystal Phillips worked closely with the USFWS Regional Office to develop project execution processes for AF level funding received in national MIPR (Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request) for site specific projects, such as black tailed prairie dog species management and short grass prairie habitat management, on Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB).

Workforce Management

Annual IT Asset Inventory: Diane Strohm performed an annual inventory of the department's IT equipment and submitted required documentation to track this equipment.

National Infrared Operations (NIROPS) Closeout Meeting: Diane Strohm participated in the annual closeout meeting for the national infrared interpretation for fire program. Diane is the only current USFWS employee qualified as an infrared interpreter.

Contracting Meeting: Pam Sponholtz, Krystal Phillips, Max Canestorp, Brian Mihlbachler and Diane Strohm met with representatives from FWS Contracting to discuss opportunities and requirements for preparing and administering natural resource contracts through the USFWS.

Personnel Actions: Pam Sponholtz worked on several waivers and position descriptions to help fill positions funded by the National agreement between the Service and the Air Force

Public Use and Recreation

Volunteer hunting guides: Greg Speights scouted for deer and elk and trained volunteer hunting guides in preparation for the fall/winter big game hunts.

Bicycle accident: Brian Mihlbachler met with the U.S. Attorney's office to discuss testimony in an upcoming trial concerning a bicycle accident on Air Force Academy property in 2008 that resulted in a personal injury claim against the Government.

Brown trout to Warren AFB: Saratoga National Fish Hatchery employee Pat Malone delivered 616 brown trout to Warren AFB. The fish were stocked into South Pearson Lake in hopes to revamp the fish program on Base. Fish were 4 years of age and averaged around 17 inches. More stocking will be scheduled in the future.



Pat Malone delivers brown trout to South Pearson Lake on Warren AFB

Edited by: Emily R. Fausch